

# Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

## *Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

### Greetings from the refuge!

We are pleased to announce the release of our final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. We thank everyone who provided comments and input on our draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) released in March 2010. The comments provided us with valuable information for preparing our final document.

The CCP is our 15-year management plan for this refuge. It furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, provides direction to achieve the purposes, vision and goals of the refuge, and contributes to state and regional conservation plans. Implementing the plan will enable us to fulfill the refuge's important role in conserving and managing wildlife resources.

You may view or download the CCP from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Back Bay/ccphome.html>.

You may also obtain a print copy or CD-ROM version by contacting the refuge headquarters (see contact information on the next page).



Loggerhead turtle



Glossy ibis feeding at an impoundment.

### Public Comment on the Draft Plan

We greatly appreciate the level of public interest and involvement in our planning, and benefited from the discussions during open houses and public meetings. Many responded to our planning update newsletters and notices in the *Federal Register*.

We released the draft CCP/EA for public comment from March 30, 2010 to May 1, 2010. We also held public meetings on April 13, 2010 and April 14, 2010 in Virginia Beach, VA.

We received 162 responses, both written and oral, during the public comment period. These comments covered a variety of topics including wetlands, habitat diversity, public participation, hunting and other public uses.

We evaluated all comments received during the comment period, and include our responses to them as Appendix K "Summary of Public Comments and Service Responses," in the final CCP. Those comments helped us improve the management objectives and strategies in the CCP.

### Highlights of the CCP

Back Bay NWR was established by Executive Order on June 6, 1938 as a Refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Its 9,120 acres support a wide variety of waterfowl and shorebirds.

The final CCP represents the array of management actions that best works toward achieving our vision and goals.

Under this plan, we will enhance the conservation of wildlife through habitat management, as well as providing additional visitor opportunities on the refuge. Public use would be improved through activities such as the expansion of the deer hunt, new hiking trails, and new, medium-sized headquarters/visitor contact station at a new location.

### Changes between Draft and Final Plan

Based on the responses we received during the public comment period, the final plan includes the following important changes from what was presented in Alternative B, the Service-preferred alternative, in the draft CCP/EA.

## Back Bay CCP Goals

- Goal 1: Maintain and enhance a diversity of wetland habitats for migratory birds.**
- Goal 2: Enhance and preserve native woodland diversity and health.**
- Goal 3: Manage beach and dunes to preserve and protect migratory bird and other wildlife habitats.**
- Goal 4: Provide healthy natural environments for native fish, wildlife, and plant populations (with special consideration to those species whose survival is in jeopardy).**
- Goal 5: Provide additional viewing opportunities of migratory birds and other wildlife to increase the general public's appreciation and support of natural resources.**
- Goal 6: Provide and expand hunting and fishing opportunities to the public where compatible with Refuge purposes.**
- Goal 7: Promote understanding and appreciation for the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats and the role of the Refuge in this effort through effective community outreach programs and partnerships.**

1. We noted no objection to the concept of the Lago Mar to Sandbridge Trail, but the refuge cannot make a determination until we complete an environmental analysis. The analysis will occur after we receive the City of Virginia Beach's plan, which should include details on developing a trailhead and spur from the proposed new Refuge Visitor Center to the Lago Mar portion of the trail. We included a map of the City's proposed trail near Sandbridge Road that was not included in the draft CCP/EA.

2. We inserted language recognizing the important partnership we have with state agencies and the need to follow required state regulations during construction of new facilities.

3. We clarified with much greater detail the goals, objectives, strategies and rationale of the refuge management direction, especially in terms of habitat management.

4. We corrected all format and typographical errors that were brought to our attention.

Our Regional Director selected a modified alternative B, with the changes noted above, for implementation. The rationale for his decision is documented in Appendix L, "Finding of No Significant Impact," of the final CCP.

### What's Next?

Implementation of priority projects decided upon by the refuge manager can begin immediately. We encourage you to stay involved during the plan's implementation. To be successful, we must continue to develop partnerships, enhance our volunteer program and support our Friends Group.

### Contact Information

To learn more about Back Bay Refuge, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/backbay/>.

You may also reach Refuge office by:  
Telephone: 757/721-2412  
Email at [fw5rw\\_bkbnwr@fws.gov](mailto:fw5rw_bkbnwr@fws.gov).

Please send mail to:  
Back Bay NWR  
4005 Sandpiper Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-4325

### Upcoming Events on the Refuge

Winter Intrepretive Tram Tours  
November-March, every other Sunday  
Starts November 7, 2010

Virginia Beach Winter Wildlife Festival  
January 29-30, 2011  
Refuge as field trip destination.  
Exhibit/Children's Activities

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>



**November 2010**

## Vision Statement for Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

*Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge will work closely with partners and communities to provide a biologically healthy natural environment that restores abundant fish, wildlife and plant populations. Special consideration will be given to those species whose survival is in jeopardy. In keeping with the Refuge System mission, we will provide a healthy haven of land and water to support Back Bay's diverse wildlife communities, with an emphasis on migratory waterbird and songbird management. We will strive to promote active stewardship of these natural resources for present and future generations, while also providing opportunities for compatible public uses. In doing this, we hope to ensure a sound coexistence between wildlife and people that will allow people to share our passion and appreciation of Back Bay's many natural resources, while also enhancing the quality of life in Back Bay.*

Northern Pintails